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Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

6988th meeting
Wednesday, 26 June 2013, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Sir Mark Lyall Grant	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Stancanelli
	Australia	Ms. King
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Sharifov
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	France	Mr. Araud
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Kim Sook
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	Togo	Mr. M'Beou
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Sahel region (S/2013/354)

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13-37415 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Sahel region (S/2013/354)

The President: Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Romano Prodi, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Prodi.

Mr. Prodi: I am very grateful for the opportunity to brief the Security Council for the second time and to present the report of the Secretary-General on the Sahel (S/2013/354). My appointment as Special Envoy in October was made in recognition of the need to focus on the Sahel as a region and on a strategy that is therefore a strategy for a region, in order to help the people and Governments of the region to sustain peace, security and development in the short and long run.

As I mentioned in my last briefing to the Council, in December 2012 (see S/PV.6882), the challenges facing the peoples of the Sahel are immense, and only a strategy that goes beyond existing efforts will allow the Governments of the region to overcome them. The ongoing efforts in the Sahel remain critical, and enhanced coordination between them is essential. But, in all honesty, I must say that a strategy that only enhances coordination between the current efforts is not sufficient. A wider vision is necessary; hence my vision of a four-by-four strategy based on the four pillars suggested by the Secretary-General — governance, security, humanitarian requirements and development — as articulated when I was appointed, with a request for areas of cooperation between the Governments of the region, the international community, among the peoples of the Sahel and, finally, within the United Nations system. I believe that four-by-four strategy should be the foundation of a collective response to the challenges of the region, and all of us must therefore be engaged in it.

I have had considerable consultations with the leaders of the Governments of the region as well as with key interlocutors of the international community, in bilateral meetings as well as in multilateral forums on the Sahel. During my visits to the region, I have met with representatives of civil society and traditional tribal, religious and women leaders. As far as coordination within the United Nations system is concerned, I have coordinated closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the Office for West Africa, Mr. Said Djinnit, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Albert Gerard Koenders, as well as with the former and current Regional Humanitarian Coordinators, Mr. David Gressly and Mr. Robert Piper. The annex to the report highlights the division of labour within the United Nations system.

Within a broader concept, I felt there has been a need to act with urgency from the very outset, while planning for the long run. Urgency is needed not only because of the gravity of the situation, but also to harness global support for the Sahel, as it will not last forever. I am afraid that, with all the problems around the world, if we do not act immediately the problem of the Sahel will take second place. The unanimous international concern over the spread of terrorism in the Sahel has provided me with an opportunity to gain support for the peoples of the region, both for the short and for the long terms. Of course, all of that was triggered by the crisis in Mali.

The situation in Mali is clearly seen by all to be symptomatic of what will happen in other parts of the Sahel if a timely response is not generated to the challenges facing the entire Sahel region. While the timely intervention of France has preserved the territorial integrity of the country and prevented a takeover of Mali by extremists and terrorists, it is now critical that the success be followed by a credible and all-inclusive political dialogue that addresses the genuine problems of all communities in the country.

I am mentioning Mali early on in my brief for two reasons. First, success or failure in Mali will affect the entire Sahel, and secondly, while focus and attention on Mali are critical, they should not be at the cost of the rest of the region. In other words, when we talk about Mali we must never forget the Sahel.

The strategy focuses on five key Sahelian countries in the greatest need. I have taken into consideration Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, the Niger and Chad. As far as the implementation of the strategy is concerned,

it requires an innovative approach that clearly shows the peoples of the Sahel that it is no longer business as usual for us. In that regard, I firmly believe that we should focus on peace and security in the Sahel.

Let me now elaborate that point further. When it comes to the region's humanitarian requirements, I believe that the humanitarian efforts under way in the region represent a success story — truly, I have never seen such a fantastic effort — and are being well coordinated under the regional coordinator. I have met the resident coordinators of the region twice, listened to them, and made it clear to them that I stand ready to help in any capacity that they feel can enhance their efforts or remove any impediments they face.

The Sahel undoubtedly suffers from a myriad of governance and security challenges. I have taken a careful look at the situation and the actors and the challenges faced or created by them. In the light of the foregoing, I strongly believe that the development pillar — development that empowers Sahelians to take care of the Sahel themselves — will provide the best opportunity to improve peace and security. There is a need to formulate concrete regional development priorities with short-term impacts, in close collaboration with the Governments of the region, while laying the foundation for sustainable long-term development. That must be followed, of course, by requisite resource mobilization through an innovative coordination mechanism that is capable of progress monitoring.

We know that success in all of this will be contingent upon progress on good governance, and I am confident that it will happen. In that respect, greater efforts on cooperation and on commitments to good governance and security will foster a greater scope of development.

I think it is very appropriate that I am briefing the Council before the start of the implementation phase. In line with the principle of empowering the Sahelians in defining solutions to their problems, a second seminar, as a follow-up to the first one of March 2013, was held on 14 June. It was similarly attended by experts from the region and academics working on the Sahel issue.

We are in the process of formulating the recommendations of the seminar into concrete, specific, quick-impact regional projects aimed at laying a foundation for long-term structural change in the region. Once finalized and after consultations with the relevant United Nations actors — including the United Nations Development Programme — have taken place, we intend to take the project to the regional Governments for discussion, endorsement and commitments to participate in implementing bottom-up strategies aimed at obtaining concrete results.

Resource mobilization for the project will be the next critical phase. Any one can choose how to contribute to that. Accordingly, resource mobilization will demand a more innovative approach. It will require a mechanism that is flexible enough to receive any form of assistance, in cash or in kind, by directly delivering the object of their choice. It will enable us to act quickly; most importantly, it will have a low operational cost so that most of the assistance can be expended in the Sahel. In view of these criteria, I am recommending the setting-up of a Sahel action fund that will act as a platform for the resources necessary to meet the needs of the Sahel, which will be defined through the regional development projects.

As I stated, donors will be free to choose the type of assistance they wish to offer, and the peoples of the Sahel will know the source of the assistance. In that regard, I have begun consultations with the African Development Bank. I have already met representatives of the World Bank, and tomorrow I will meet the President of the World Bank, in order to explore the possibility of the two Banks co-managing the fund, with support from a pool of other international financial institutions, including the Islamic Development Bank, the European Investment Bank, and others, each of which has already expressed an interest in participating in the effort. At the same time, a coordination mechanism will be needed to monitor progress and to ensure that no resources are wasted due to duplication of efforts.

It is an innovative process. The development proposal has come from Sahel University, with the support of the United Nations. The proposal will become the development plan, after approval by the Governments of the countries of the Sahel. The main sectors addressed will be water and agriculture, new energy sources, decentralized solar energy, transportation infrastructure, and infrastructure for hospitals and schools.

An action fund platform is to be established and managed by a pool of international development institutions and coordinated by the World Bank and the African Development Bank; a coordination mechanism will be established among the United Nations, banks and donors to monitor the process.

I would like also to clarify that the resource mobilization will be in addition to the assistance required for the ongoing humanitarian development activities of the United Nations in the region. I call upon the donor community to maintain its assistance to that critical project.

Finally, taking into account the necessity to bring about long-term sustainability by enabling the peoples and Governments of the Sahel, I have recommended the establishment of a Sahel development research institute, because the people will have to work together, which they have never done. They have worked in Paris and elsewhere, but never together. The research institute will be funded through the Sahel action fund. The institute will be located in the region. It will constitute a very light administrative and management structure and will act as a training facility to generate local expertise in issues confronting the Sahel. We will request the donor community to second experts on specific issues, as in-kind assistance, to form the faculty and substantive body of the institute.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate two messages. First, we cannot forget the Sahel, or we will have more Malis; secondly, I appeal to the international community to be as generous to the Sahel as it has been towards Mali.

The President: I thank Mr. Prodi for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.20 p.m.